

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 243487

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ALATHERTON, JR./HLK

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY

S/S-O: MTANNER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 243487

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, US

SUBJECT: ARMS FOR EGYPT

REF: CAIRO 10180

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

1. YOU MADE ALL THE RIGHT POINTS IN YOUR DISCUSSION WITH FAHMY REPORTED REFTEL. I RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE THAT EGYPTIANS ATTACH TO GETTING SOME CONCRETE ARMS COMMITMENTS FROM US IN CONTEXT OF SADAT'S VISIT AND THAT THEY WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO REVERT TO THIS SUBJECT. DIFFICULT AS IT IS TO HAVE TO CONTINUE TO DEFLATE THEIR EXPECTATIONS, IT IS BETTER TO BE DOING SO NOW THAN FOR THEM TO BE UNDER ANY ILLUSION ABOUT HOW FAR WE CAN GO IN THIS RESPECT WHEN SADAT ARRIVES IN U.S. I LEAVE IT TO YOU HOW AND WHEN YOU CONTINUE THIS DIALOGUE WITH FAHMY BUT WANT TO GIVE YOU FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR USE AS OPPORTUNITIES ARISE.

SECRET

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PAGE 02 STATE 243487

2. IF I HAD SAID ANY LESS THEN I DID ON THIS QUESTION

DURING MY "MEET THE PRESS" INTERVIEW, WE WOULD HAVE RUN
SERIOUS RISK OF STIMULATING MOVEMENT IN CONGRESS TO PASS
RESOLUTION FLATLY PROHIBITING ANY ARMS SALES TO EGYPT.
FAHMY MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THIS HAS THE MAKINGS OF A MAJOR
POLITICAL ISSUE IN THE U.S. HE KNOWS OUR SYMPATHY FOR
PRESIDENT SADAT'S NEEDS; IF WE ARE TO MOVE IN THE DIREC-
TION WE BOTH WISH, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE GROUND BE
CAREFULLY PREPARED IN CONSULTATIONS WITH CONGRESS AND
THAT WE NOT APPEAR TO HAVE MADE DECISIONS WHICH WOULD
PREEMPT THAT CONSULTATION PROCESS. AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT
IN PREPARING THE GROUND WILL BE PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT
AND HIS CONTACTS WITH CONGRESS AND THE MEDIA HERE. OUR
PRESENT NEED IS TO AVOID PRECIPITATING DEBATE AND CON-
GRESSIONAL DECISIONS WHICH WOULD FORECLOSE ALL POSSIBILITIES
FOR THE FUTURE. WE MUST TAKE MATTERS IN THEIR LOGICAL
SEQUENCE. OUR FIRST PROBLEM IS TO GET THE ECONOMIC AID
PACKAGE THROUGH CONGRESS AND THE SINAI AGREEMENT IMPLE-
MENTED. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THESE STEPS NOT BE
COMPLICATED BY PREMATURE DEBATE OVER ARMS SUPPLY QUESTION.
ONCE THEY ARE BEHIND US, WE WILL HAVE A BETTER ATMOSPHERE
IN WHICH TO CONSIDER ARMS SUPPLY QUESTION IN MORE SPECIFIC
WAY THEN IS NOW POSSIBLE. KISSINGER

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